

Message Text

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EO 11652 NA

TAGS: PFOR PBOR LOS VE CO PN

SUBJ: SANTA MARTA SUMMIT: VENEZUELAN AFTERMATH

REF: CARACAS 7551; CARACAS 7649

1. IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE SANTA MARTA SUMMIT THE ATTENTION OF VENEZUELAN CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS AND THE LOCAL PRESS HAS BEEN CENTERED ON VENEZUELA'S DISPUTE WITH COLOMBIA OVER DELIMITATION OF TERRITORIAL WATERS. FOREIGN MINISTER ESCOVAR APPEARED BEFORE A CLOSED SESSION OF THE CONGRESSIONAL FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEES JUL 31 AT WHICH VENEZUELA'S POSITION WITH REGARD TO COLOMBIAN PRESIDENT LOPEZ'S RECENT PROPOSAL FOR A COLOMBIAN-VENEZUELAN CONDOMINIUM IN THE GULF OF VENEZUELA WAS DISCUSSED. ESCOVAR DECLINED TO OUTLINE GOV POLICY FOR THE PRESS EXCEPT TO SAY THAT VENEZUELA "WILL NOT SURRENDER ANY RIGHT NOR COMPROMISE ANY INTEREST" THAT IS LEGITIMATE. A LOCAL RADIO NEWSCAST REPORTED THAT ESCOVAR TOLD THE COMMITTEE THAT THE CONCEPT OF A HISTORICAL BAY BELONGING TO TWO COUNTRIES IS SOMETHING NEW IN INTERNATIONAL LAW AND NEEDS TO BE STUDIED.

2. FOLLOWING ESCOVAR'S APPEARANCE, THE CHAIRMEN OF THE TWO CONGRESSIONAL FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEES EXPRESSED THEIR
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SATISFACTION WITH GOV POLICY IN THE DISPUTE WITH COLOMBIA AND

THEIR DESIRE TO MAINTAIN A NONPARTISAN APPROACH IN FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS. MAS SENATOR ANDRES SOSA PIETRI, A MEMBER OF THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, INDICATED HE WAS NOT FULLY CONTENT WITH THE RECENT GOV COMMUNIQUE ABOUT "CLOSING OFF" THE GULF TO ALL BUT VENEZUELA AND COLOMBIA (CARACAS 7551). SOSA SAID IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO SPEAK OF "CLOSING OFF" A ZONE THAT IS ALREADY CLOSED NOR OF "CONDOMINIUM" OVER AN AREA WHERE "VENEZUELA EXERCISES AND HAS ALWAYS EXERCISED EXCLUSIVE AND ABSOLUTE SOVERIEGNTY." SOSA COLLED FOR THE FOREIGN MINISTRY TO ISSUE AN OFFICIAL EXPLANATION.

3. PRESIDENT PEREZ COMMENTED JUL 30 THAT THE SANTA MARTA SUMMIT HAD BEEN "VERY BENEFICIAL FOR FUTURE OF VENEZUELA," BUT ADDED THAT THE TIME HAD NOT COME TO MAKE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS. FOREIGN MINISTER ESCOVAR DESCRIBED THE SANTA MARTA TALKS AS "VERY POSITIVE AND VERY CORDIAL." ESCOVAR ANNOUNCED JUL 31 THAT AFTER ACCOMPANYING PERZ TO BOLIVIA NEXT WEEK, HE WILL VISIT BOGOTA FOR FURTHER CONVERSATIONS WITH THE GOC ON MATTERS SUCH AS THE TERRITORIAL WATERS DISPUTE AND THE POSSIBILITY OF CLOSING OFF THE GULF. MEANWHILE LUIS PINERUA, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE GOVERNING AD PARTY, GAVE AN ASSURANCE THAT THE GOV WOULD NOT CONCLUDE AN AGREEMENT WITH COLOMBIA THAT ADVERSELY AFFECTED VENEZUELA'S INTERESTS. HE ADDED THAT ANY ACCORD WOULD BE FULLY PUBLICIZED.

4. COMMENT: THE GOV'S MAIN PREOCCUPATION AT THE SANTA MARTA SUMMIT WAS NOT TO APPEAR AFTERWARDS TO HAVE GIVEN ANYTHING AWAY TO THE COLOMBIANS IN THE TERRITORIAL WATERS DISPUTE. SINCE NO ONE HAS SUGGESTED THAT PRESIDENT PEREZ WAS CONVERTED BY PRESIDENT LOPEZ'S ESPOUSAL OF A CONDOMINIUM OVER THE GULF OF VENEZUELA, PEREZ'S LATEST FORAY ABROAD HAS TO BE PUT DOWN IN THE SUCCESS COLUMN. EXCEPT FOR PUBLISHING THE TEXTS OF THE VARIOUS AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE THREE HEADS OF STATE, PRESS COVERAGE FOLLOWING THE SUMMIT HAS FOCUSED EXCLUSIVELY ON VENEZUELA'S "DIFERENCEO" WITH COLOMBIA. AFTER AVOIDING AN APPEARANCE BEFORE THE JOINT FOREING RELATIONS COMMITTEE JUL 28 JUST PRIOR TO LEAVING FOR COLOMBIA, ESCOVAR FOR HIS PART APPEARS TO HAVE DONE A GOOD JOB AT MENDING HIS FENCES WITH THE CONGRESS'S FOREIGN POLICY EXPERTS. SENATOR RAMON VELASQUEZ, CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, INDICATED THAT ESCOVAR HAS PROMISED TO TAKE UP OTHER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MATTERS, SUCH AS THE TRINIDADIAN PRIME MINISTER'S RECENT STATEMENTS ABOUT VENEZUELA AND THE GUYANA BOUNDARY QUESTION, AT A FUTURE SESSION OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE.
SHLAUDEMAM

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